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A Certain Samaritan and a Certain Woman – Luke 10:25-42

Introduction – We need to be careful as we look at these two stories, both of which have passed into folklore. We don't need to have read our Bible to know what a "Good Samaritan" is, nor the difference between being a "Mary, not a Martha." But what was really at stake when Jesus challenged this lawyer, and later, when he corrected Martha? On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus is shaking up the very foundations of what has become a crusted-over view of being a disciple of God. Maybe we could use some shaking up as well.

A Certain Samaritan (vv25-37)– Hatred between the Jews and Samaritans had existed for centuries by the time of Jesus, and this smoldering tension exists even today, manifested in the antagonism between Israel and Palestine in current events. The Samaritan is the last person to show up in this story, but he is certainly central to the point.

A Lawyer – A "*nomikos*" was an expert in the law. This is evidenced by the man's perfect answers to Jesus' question in v26. But, he is looking to trick Jesus and justify himself (v25, 29) and Luke shows us how he is asking the wrong question. His question and Jesus' answer do not match, and that's part of the point. He wants to know how far he has to go, who really counts as his neighbor.

A Priest and a Levite – The first two who come upon the beaten man in Jesus' story would be "neighbors" in the lawyer's mind; fellow Jews. But Jesus isn't interested in answering that question – not that way.

The Confrontation – The issue is really what it means to be Israel, God's people. Jesus answers, as He often does with His enemies, with questions and stories to trap the people trying to trap Him. The lawyer wants to define "neighbor." Jesus lays the emphasis on being a neighbor to whoever is before you in need. And Jesus intends to annoy the lawyer by holding up a Samaritan as an example of a good neighbor. Consider as well vv34-35 as a great example/definition of "compassion." Compassion costs something.

The God of Israel – Of course, Jesus is ultimately the Good Samaritan, who comes after the Levite and Priest have refused to offer care, and heal the wounded man. Jesus is in the business of removing the burdens of others, taking them upon Himself; He is our Good Neighbor. And this is because the God of Israel was never thinking only of Israel. Israel's God is the God of grace for the whole world, and a neighbor is anybody in need.

What is At Stake? – No Christian and no church can remain content with easy definitions which allow us to watch most of the world lying half-dead on the road. Faithfulness will bring about faithful actions and deeds that imitate our Lord's compassion and message of grace. Of course, this requires that we believe that Jesus was lifted up that He might draw *all* men to Himself.

A Certain Woman (vv38-42) – This woman was Martha, and it helps to note that Martha was loved by Jesus (see John 11:5) and that the issue was not that Martha was being domestic while Jesus was there (for look carefully at John 12:2). One author paraphrased v 40, "*Martha was frantic with all the work in the kitchen.*"

Mary – Martha's sister sat at the feet of Jesus. This phrase is not to be taken literally; it means that she placed herself under His teaching. She was giving herself to learning as His disciple (see Acts 22:3). It is clear from the New Testament that women are not supposed to be ordained to teaching offices in the church (1 Tim 2:11-15), but it is equally clear that they are to be Christ's disciples; here there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female.

"You are Worried..." – In the story of the Samaritan, we saw that faithfulness produced faithful works. For this and many other reasons we must reject the notion that this story is about the contemplative life being supreme to the active life. But it is about being preoccupied, worried, troubled, and frantic about "many things," while missing the "one thing needed." Christ does not mean that everything else is of no importance, but that we must pay proper attention to priorities, lest what is *accessory* become our chief concern.

What is at Stake? – For the Christian disciple, Christ comes first – always. What are some similar examples for us of making the accessory the chief concern and missing Christ in our "faithful" service and good intentions? Modern day weddings come to mind. So does an inordinate amount of time preparing one's face or email for the day with no time at the feet of Jesus. And what about this service of worship where we have been called into our Lord's presence? If we feel put off because we have been called to set aside the beginning of the new week for the worship of our God and to offer Him our firstfruits, maybe we are

“*worried and troubled about many things.*” If we are too busy to make the worship of the God of the universe – we are too busy.

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